



**Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction**  
**Chris Reykdal, State Superintendent**

*All students prepared  
for post-secondary pathways,  
careers, & civic engagement.*

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

# **UPDATE: Gangs in Schools Task Force**

**2019**

**Authorizing legislation:** [RCW 28A.300.490](#)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary ..... 2

Background ..... 3

Update Status..... 3

Conclusion and Next Steps ..... 4

## **Executive Summary**

A Gangs in Schools Task Force was created under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.320.490 to examine current adult and youth gang activities that are affecting school safety. The Task Force met regularly from 2008–2013 to examine current adult and youth gang activities affecting school safety and to make recommendations to the Legislature.

The Task Force submitted legislative recommendations for several years. Ultimately, the Task Force chose to focus on three primary areas of activity with direct impact on gang activity in schools: data, policy guidance, and training. The Task Force stopped meeting in 2013 and reiterates the previous recommendations as submitted to the Legislature.

## Background

In 2007, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 5097, which required the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a task force to examine how gangs are affecting school safety. The task force must annually report its findings and recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature. The Gangs in Schools Task Force submitted legislative recommendations for several years. Ultimately, the Task Force chose to focus on three primary areas of activity, with direct impact on gang activity in schools: data, policy guidance, and training.

## Update Status

Due to turnover in organizational staffing and Task Force membership, and little to no changes in the recommendations, the Gangs in Schools Task Force has not met since 2013.

**Data:** The Healthy Youth Survey (HYS), a voluntary survey distributed to a representative sample of students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 every other year, includes one question related to youth gang affiliation and activity: In the past 12 months, have you been a member of a gang? In 2016, 5% of 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students surveyed responded 'yes.'

There is no category defined for reporting gang activity in current state or federal reports.

**Policy Guidance:** Previously, the Task Force examined local, regional, and national policies and guidance for dealing with gang activity in schools. The Task Force then drafted policy guidance for school districts and communities, including definitions and identification criteria for recognizing gang activity within a school setting. School districts may use the guidance to create their own policies and procedures regarding gang activity in their schools.

**Trainings:** Since the previous report, there have been no trainings offered through the Task Force.

**Meetings:** As noted above, the Task Force is no longer meeting. The School Safety and Student Wellbeing Advisory Committee would address any new issues related to gang activity in schools.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

The School Safety and Student Wellbeing Advisory Committee will address any new issues around gang activity in schools. This Gangs in Schools Task Force report reiterates the three recommendations previously forwarded to the Legislature. If addressing gang activity within schools is to be a priority for schools and districts, the Task Force recommends that the Legislature:

1. Provide funding to support future Task Force work.
2. Provide funding for training, data collection, and implementation of innovative programs and promising practices. It is also recommended that funding be provided to support the work of promising, community-based efforts.
3. Provide a dedicated apportionment for transition/re-entry programs for adjudicated youth. As a component of its draft policy and procedural guidance, the Task Force recognizes the importance of wraparound educational and reengagement services for students who are suspended or expelled for gang-related activity. The Task Force recommends funding such activity.



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